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Social and human rights questions: narcotic drugs

Identical letters dated 30 May 2007 from the President of the International Narcotics Control Board to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council

The present letter is in regard to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, section 16, International drug control, crime and terrorism prevention and criminal justice.

The International Narcotics Control Board is an independent treaty body consisting of 13 members elected by the Economic and Social Council. The Board monitors and promotes compliance with the provisions of three international drug control Conventions which aim to limit the use of drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes. Those Conventions are the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971, and the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.

Pursuant to article 11 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the Board "shall meet as often as, in its opinion, may be necessary for the proper discharge of its functions, but shall hold at least two sessions in each calendar year". In fact, the Board meets three times in each calendar year, in Vienna, where its secretariat is located.

In addition to the meetings of the Board, country missions are undertaken by Board members to engage in dialogue with Governments on ways of curbing drug problems, and to collect relevant information on the drug situation in the countries visited. The Board normally undertakes 20 to 26 country missions every year.

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** E/2007/100.

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The outcome of the Board's missions and dialogue with Governments is that more than 180 countries have ratified the three Conventions. The missions have also helped to promote the implementation of the provisions of the Conventions by Governments.

To maintain the impartiality and independence of the Board, article 6 of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and article 24 of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances state that the expenses of the Board will "be borne by the United Nations in such manner as shall be decided by the General Assembly".

The financial provisions for the Board and its secretariat have been included in the regular budget of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and its predecessor, the United Nations Drug Control Programme. Since 2000, the funds allocated to the Board to discharge its functions have not kept pace with pressing calls for the Board to intervene in countries with serious risks of undermining the drug control Conventions.

The Board has nevertheless carried out its obligations by deferring or cancelling important country missions and by limiting the number of Board members going on a single mission. These measures appear not to have improved the Board's financial situation. The Board is finding it difficult to hold its three annual meetings and to carry out its mandated dialogue with Governments because of inadequate funding from the United Nations regular budget. This situation has led me to approach the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for possible financial assistance to the Board to enable it to carry out its functions for the remainder of the current biennium.

The amount of $774,200 is being proposed for the biennium 2008-2009. The Board believes that an amount of $996,609 will be required to cover daily subsistence allowances and travel costs of Board members to attend the three mandatory sessions held in Vienna and to carry out country missions, as appropriate. It should be emphasized that members of the Board come from different parts of the world, including Australia, China and Indonesia.

During the eighty-ninth session of the Board, held in Vienna in May 2007, the members expressed concerns over the critical financial situation of the Board, which, if not reversed, could jeopardize its work. They decided to authorize the President of the Board to bring their concerns to the attention of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, which have responsibility under the Conventions to cover the expenses of the Board and to ensure that it can function properly.

I would very much appreciate it if the present letter could be brought to the attention of the members of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Fifth Committee, for appropriate action with a view to providing adequate financial resources to the Board from the United Nations regular budget for the biennium 2008-2009 and beyond.

(*Signed*) P. O. **Emafo**
President
International Narcotics Control Board